

“Questions Every Christian Should Ask Themselves,” Part 2 - 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 – April 19th, 2015

- Today's teaching will be part two of a series I've titled, "Questions Every Christian Should Ask Themselves."
- Starting in chapter seven and now continuing here in chapter eight, Paul is answer questions the Corinthians asked him about.
- Beginning in chapter eight, we turn a corner of sorts going from questions about marriage and divorce to our freedoms in Christ.
- More specifically, the freedom in Christ concerning food that was sacrificed to idols, as was practiced in that culture in Corinth.
- I found very interesting some of the comments about last week's teaching concerning Halal meat that is offered to the Muslims.
- I have to confess that I didn't even think about this in the context of this chapter here in 1 Corinthians, but it does actually apply.
- It's for this reason that I would like to once again recommend a great website, "gotquestions.org," as they answer this one well.

Question: "Is it allowable for a Christian to eat halal food?" Answer: The word halal means "permissible" in Arabic. It refers to food, objects, or actions that are allowed in Islam. Among other things, halal meat must be killed with a sharp knife and drained of blood. No carnivorous animals, birds of prey, or meat contaminated with non-permissible substances can be used. This, in and of itself, is a healthy way of preparing meat. The problem comes when Allah's name is pronounced over the meat during the butchering process. Many interpret this to mean the animal was sacrificed to a false god—an idol. Nearly two thousand years ago, Paul wrote to the church in Corinth regarding the permissibility of eating meat sacrificed to idols, because the Corinthians also struggled with this issue. ... Paul told the Corinthian Christians that a false idol is nothing. It has no authority. It did not create the animal or provide the owner with it (1 Corinthians 8:4). The point, then, becomes not the food or the idol it was sacrificed to, but concern for other people. Mature Christians realize that food, sacrificed to an idol or not, is a neutral entity. Believers have freedom in Christ to eat or not, as they choose. But freedom is useless without love. And if eating meat sacrificed to idols is harmful to another believer, it should be avoided. ...Halal food is no different. There is one God who provides for us. Claiming the name of a false god does nothing to the food physically or spiritually. But, like the Corinthians, we should always act out of love. If we are with others who believe halal food is wrong to eat, we should refrain out of concern for their conviction. If we are served food by someone who makes a point that it is halal, we should refrain as a quiet sign that we do not accept the authority of the false god to which it was dedicated. If we are in a restaurant or market or school or home that, we suspect, is serving halal food, we should eat and give thanks to the true God who provides. <http://www.gotquestions.org/halal-food.html>

- Be that as it may, this brings us to our text today, where, beginning in verse four, Paul addresses this issue concerning meat.
- In so doing, he provides us a template of sorts with which to discern whether or not we should when this matter presents itself.
- This template, or litmus test, if you prefer, first and foremost has to do with loving one another, especially the weaker Christian.

1. Am I tearing down or building up? (Verses 1-3)

- Here Paul contrasts knowledge with love telling them that knowledge will puff up, whereas love on the other hand will build up.

2. Do I know the truth about false gods? (Verses 4-6)

4 Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), 6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

- v4 Paul says concerning things offered to idols, we know an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.
- v5 He then says these so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, are no gods at all, even if they are seen as being gods.
- v6 He explains why, saying there is one God, of and through Whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ.

- What Paul says here is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that Islam teaches there is no god but Allah.
- In Arabic its, "lā 'ilāha 'illā-llāh," which in English, "there is no God but Allah," and they add Mohammed is the prophet of Allah.
- Here's the reason that I point this out, just because they see or say these gods are gods doesn't mean that they are true gods.

- Here's the bottom line as false gods we can eat everything that's sacrificed to a god that's nothing, as it doesn't mean anything.
- Perhaps better said, it's okay to eat anything offered to these so-called gods by virtue of the fact these gods don't even exist.
- I would suggest this is why Paul answers them in the way he does. In other words, he's saying they have no basis in reality.

Adam Clarke of this said, "There are many images that are supposed to be representations of divinities: but these divinities are nothing, the figments of mere fancy; and these images have no corresponding realities."

- In closing let me hasten to say there's an exception to this notion of eating everything for gods of nothing not meaning anything.
- The exception in a word is, "love." As we'll see in this chapter, the overriding principle is love concerning the weaker Christian.
- In other words if I truly love my brother or sister in Christ for whom this may be an issue I will abstain so as to not stumble them.